

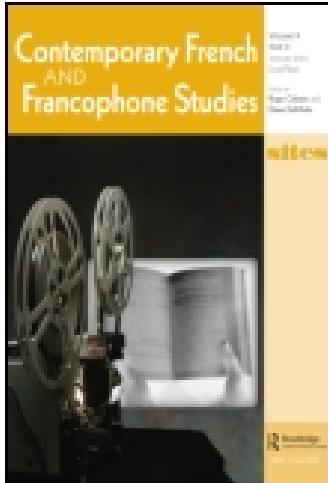
This article was downloaded by: [The Aga Khan University]

On: 27 October 2014, At: 06:59

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH,
UK



Sites: The Journal of Twentieth-Century/ Contemporary French Studies revue d'études français

Publication details, including instructions for
authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gsit19>

Is There a Sadean Eroticism at the Heart of Baudrillard?

Nick Hanlon

Published online: 29 Oct 2010.

To cite this article: Nick Hanlon (2002) Is There a Sadean Eroticism at the Heart of Baudrillard?, *Sites: The Journal of Twentieth-Century/Contemporary French Studies revue d'études français*, 6:1, 213-226

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10260210290021879>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Is There a Sadean Eroticism at the Heart of Baudrillard?

Nick Hanlon

The notion of eroticism in Sade and, to a significant degree, in Jean Baudrillard is integral to, and representative of, certain thematics essential to each of these writers' textual and philosophical endeavors, most notably for this discussion, transgression, play, and destabilization.

This paper seeks to ascertain the extent of the presence of a “Sadean eroticism” in Baudrillard and the nature of such a concept in relation to its Baudrillardian context and appropriation. This appropriation must be seen in terms of the twentieth-century French reception of Sade, by such major theoreticians as Roland Barthes, Pierre Klossowski, Georges Bataille, and Maurice Blanchot, whose appreciation of the Divine Marquis is that of a thinker of limits, paradox, impossibility and discourse. The formulation “Sadean eroticism” might already begin to convey some of the force of paradox that is central to so many twentieth-century considerations of Sade; for example, many might believe that Sade’s perverse and cruel narrativization of sex is so far from the conventional idea of sexual love as to be therefore distinct from the term eroticism. Notwithstanding the limited and somewhat puritanical tenor of such a perspective, we begin to sense the problems and assumptions enmeshed in the notion of eroticism, which become greatly amplified when conjoined with the often emotive adjective “Sadean.”

Therefore, what do we mean by “Sadean eroticism”? In crude terms, this phrase connotes, as one might expect,

perversion, sex, cruelty, Evil (“Mal”), but also it raises the problematic of the disjunction discernible between the concepts of “eroticism” and “animal sexuality” along the lines of that expressed by Octavio Paz in his *An Erotic Beyond: Sade* (1998). Paz writes: “Eroticism unfolds in society, in history [...]. [It is] in perpetual osmosis with animal sexuality and with the historical world, but also in perpetual contradiction of the two” (14–15).¹ We may conceive of the erotic as residing in the realm of the semiotic, that of civilized and conscious man. It is in contradistinction to animal sexuality in the sense that the latter represents the instinctual aspect, uncolored by societal nuance, fetishism. Thus Baudrillard asserts in *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (1976): “In the system of actuality, the body as locus of primary processes opposes itself to the body as secondary process: use value and erotic exchange value, rationalization under the sign of value” (183).² Paglia (1991: 239) justifiably discerns “Apolline” and “Dionysiac” strands in Sade’s text (although, in a Nietzschean sense it would be more accurate to distinguish “Socratic” as well as “Apolline” elements). Indebted to La Mettrie and D’Holbach, Sade constantly makes reference to “nature,” justifying and substantiating many of his arguments in terms of it. Sade’s understanding of “nature” may be associated with the Dionysiac or animal sexuality.³ This is complicated by his presentation and analysis of an interrelated eroticism that is neither entirely primal or instinctual nor entirely Apolline or rational.

The problematic encountered by Sade and Baudrillard in their engagement with the notion of eroticism may be conceived of as the tension between instinct and rationality, the primal and the semiotic. It is their distinctly divergent understandings and presentations of “nature” in this context that differentiates them most markedly. The corporeal focus of Sade’s discourse of perversion will be seen to become in Baudrillard the *semiotic* instantiation of perversion as a figure of transgression, not least the transgression of corporeality.

A Semiotic Appropriation of Sade

Roland Barthes’s text *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* presents a powerful semiotic interpretation (and one might say legitimization) of Sade’s writing. Barthes affirms: “The greatness of Sade is not that he celebrated crime, perversion, [...] it is that he invented a discourse of immense proportions” (130). This claim is

founded on his contention: “Sade always chooses the discourse rather than the referent; he always situates himself in the realm of *semiosis*, rather than that of *mimesis*” (40). According to Barthes (35), Sade’s “érotique” is essentially rhetorical (although there cannot be much doubt that Barthes’s own interpretation of Sade is strongly rhetorical, as his hyperbolic analyses, essentially denying any reality to Sade’s extreme literary creations, negate an important aspect of Sade’s work: that of *praxis*). Barthes asserts: “The only Sadean universe is that of discourse.” (39). Such a focus on discourse and semiotics is indicative of the general trend in the twentieth century subsequent to the surrealists (who championed Sade as a revolutionary icon without closely engaging with his text). The trend was to consider Sade in terms of the potentialities of his discourse, his thinking of textuality, rather than the repeated viscerality of the content. Bataille is a notable exception here, for in *La valeur d’usage de D. A. F. de Sade* (1967), he places much emphasis on shitting and vomiting, and indeed eating shit and vomit, in his propounding of the theoretical figures of “appropriation” and “excrément.” Although his discussion is fairly theoretical, he is engaging with the real possibility of certain aspects of Sade, as a means of overcoming the rationalist imperative characterized by his notion of “appropriation.”

Baudrillard’s conception of Sade, and culture more generally, is in terms of a semiotic framework. Speaking of culture in *La transparence du mal* (1990), Baudrillard posits “a sort of *semiologisation* of the media and publicity which invades everything” (17). It is clear that Baudrillard’s general conception of contemporary culture is one that privileges appearance and the sign over the real. This is the very essence of his central notion of the hyperreal, as he writes in *Simulacres et Simulation* (1981): “Simulation is no longer that of a territory, of a referential being, of a substance. It is the generation through models of a real with neither origin nor reality: a hyperreal” (10). Baudrillard’s presentation of an original reality displaced in contemporary society by the precession of simulacra also entails a renewed status for the body: “This body, our body, only ever appears now as superfluous in its extent, in the multiplicity and the complexity of its organs, tissues, functions, because today everything is concentrated in the brain and in the genetic formula, which alone sum up the operational definition of the being.” (*L’autre par lui-même*, habilitation [1987] 17). This is the transgression of corporeality alluded to in the introduction, as Baudrillard presents a desubstantialized

conception of the body. *De la séduction* (1979) is perhaps the text where we see Baudrillard's most direct and explicit connection with Sade. Baudrillard makes several direct references that, unusually, give some indication of the debt he owes to the eighteenth-century philosopher.⁴ Very early in this text Baudrillard attacks feminism for being too focused on truth and the corporeal (19–20). He seems to disdain an anatomical, biological approach as he cites an explicit, anatomical description by Luce Irigaray of female sexual stimulation to demonstrate the irony of feminism's rejection of the anatomical and phallic Freud, despite anatomy and biology being at the fundaments of feminism's own approach. Baudrillard's disdain here for the anatomical, biological approach is indicative of his attitude regarding nature (different from Sade's), as alluded to in the introduction. That attitude is one which, in line with his conception of culture, generally privileges the power of the image, the semiotic and consciousness over nature, the primal and the instinctual.

Baudrillard's position is: "Hot and sexual obscenity is succeeded by cold, communicational obscenity" (*L'autre par lui-même, habilitation* 22). "*We are in the midst of the ecstasy of communication*" (*ibid.* 20). We should note, though, that this ecstasy and obscenity are not purely, or even mainly sexual. For Baudrillard there is a pornography of information and communication in its availability, transparency, performativity – the fact that everything is on show in this Debordian "society of the spectacle." Pornography itself has left the realm of the real and has made sex "more real than the real" (*De la séduction* 46). Thus Baudrillard sees pornography not in terms of reality, but rather hyperreality. This does not by any means diminish the significance of pornography, because for Baudrillard hyperreality and the simulacra of which it consists are the very substance of contemporary consciousness. The point here is that any Sadean elements appropriated by Baudrillard (such as sex, cruelty, subversion, perversion) have been appropriated in terms of their application to consciousness and the semiotic, rather than in a corporeal or visceral sense. The most striking example of this is Baudrillard's notion of "séduction" (which will be discussed later). Baudrillard's semiotic appropriation of Sade is revelatory of his conception of nature – a conception which, unlike Sade, does not envisage man as completely dominated by the will of nature, but rather as being caught up in a play of signifiers only loosely connected to nature. Where the madness or paradox of Sade's text lies in its insistence on the power of rationality and

philosophy at the same time as its affirming man's subordination to the will of nature, the madness or paradox of Baudrillard's text, as in for example *La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu* (1991), lies in the assumption that because something exists on film, television, or some other media, then that something is automatically denuded of substance. That is to say, when Baudrillard gives primacy to words and signifiers, it ends up being just as much a gesture of paradox as Sade's avowedly *philosophical* prostration before the god Nature.

Transgression in Baudrillard and Sade

The ground on which Baudrillard positions himself in relation to Sade is well formulated in the first paragraph of *La transparence du mal* (11). Here, Baudrillard characterizes the state of actuality as being one that is "après l'orgie," in the sense that there has been liberation in every domain – not only sexual, but also political, productive, destructive, of women, children, the unconscious, art, and so on. Sade was very intent on striving after individual freedom, and at the same time, as a significant part of this, wanted both to depict and practice orgies. Baudrillard is here exploiting and modifying such a narrative, taking advantage of the rhetorical power of the word and idea of the orgy (in a reciprocal and ironic gesture, which succeeds in both critiquing and reflecting a society obsessed with sex). Yet Baudrillard's driving force, both rhetorically and intellectually, is far less erotic than Sade's, as is demonstrated by the above list of the (predominantly nonsexual) component parts of the orgiastic liberation. We find a parallel phenomenon in the example of Baudrillard's notion of "la séduction" (elaborated principally in *De la séduction*), which is evidently, even in its basic semantics, crucially connected (but also disconnected) with sex, but this is far from its only connotation in Baudrillard.

Subversion is undoubtedly one of the primary driving forces of Baudrillard's texts. Baudrillard writes of himself: "I am a terrorist and nihilist in theory as others are in arms" (*Simulacres et simulation*, 233). There is a strong correlation with Sade here, who states in a letter "my pen will be my weapon" (quoted in Schaeffer, 264).⁵ The correlation is more than the simple fact that each writer has a strong drive to subvert, but consists as well in an overlapping epistemological understanding underpinning each writer's process and methodology. In *La pensée radicale* (1994), Baudrillard states "Our consciousness is never the echo of

our own reality” (6). In this book, Baudrillard notes that our understanding of exteriority (and interiority) is always colored, or even formed, by concepts and theories. This means that strident, iconoclastic theorizing might change the way we view and understand things. This text is a manifesto for such “pensée radicale,” which is presented as a perpetual rejuvenating process (with no particular end) in the manner of a Nietzschean “revaluation of all values.” The position of sex and eroticism in Baudrillard and Sade is integral to the operation of such transgression and destabilization in their texts.

“La séduction,” like Baudrillard’s notion of “le Mal” in *La transparence du mal* is never crisply defined. Instead, multiple overlapping definitions are presented, all of which serve to modify and corrupt the semantic connotations that this word would usually entail for the reader. Thus the very definition and presentation of the word immediately involves a transgression of conventional expectations. Moreover, through its various definitions, one’s overwhelming sense is of a notion that is preeminently transgressive, as it is set up in opposition to “production” (conceived of by Baudrillard as a pervasively dominant narrative in contemporary capitalist society), and is frequently presented as a “défi” (see for example 70–71). The “seduction/production” opposition may be seen as significantly connected with the aforementioned Bataillean dichotomy between “appropriation” and “excrément”, since “séduction” constitutes a challenge to conventional “appropriation,” except that this is without the Bataillean focus on the carnal and bodily functions.

Transgression is of integral importance to the actions and philosophies of Sade’s characters and narrators. The entirety of *La philosophie dans le boudoir* concerns the corruption of the morals of the young Eugénie, an activity in which the libertine perpetrators of this action take great delight. This subject matter provides a pretext for Sade to provoke, challenge, and expound arguments against conventional morality and religion. There is a significant and unanswered question, though, in relation to the libertine and Sadean representation of transgression. This problem stems from the libertines’ great pleasure in transgression, to the extent that it is intimately bound up with their sexual stimulation and orgasms. Thus Saint-Ange states: “The dirtiest, most loathsome and most forbidden is what best stimulates the mind . . . this is always the source of the most delicious ejaculations” (50). Exploring the depths of human psychology

as part of a will to transgression is stimulating both intellectually and physically/sexually for the Sadean libertine. Dolmancé also affirms this: “One of my greatest pleasures is to blaspheme against God when I get a hard-on.” Yet the problem with transgression being such an integral part of the libertines’ sexual/intellectual pleasure, and indeed daily existence, is that if they succeed in subverting the regressive narratives to which they are opposed, then they will be losing some of their pleasure and *raison d'être*. For, as Dolmancé says, “From the moment when there is no longer a God, what use is it to insult his name?” (66). This is a problem noted by Klossowski, who observes the paradox of the libertine who needs to preserve his/her victim at the same time he seeks to annihilate it, and, as James remarks: “By the same token a perversion of a norm requires the maintenance of that norm in order to have any value at all as perversion” (58); or as Klossowski puts it: “Perversion [...] derives its transgressive value only from *the permanence of norms*” (26). In a similar manner, then, Baudrillard’s incessant railing against the establishment must be seen as an implicit affirmation of the necessity of that establishment.

A good example of a Sadean transgression taken up by Baudrillard, among other places in his notion of “séduction,” is that of the corruption of the conventional understanding of the divide between masculine and feminine. Throughout Sade’s texts, these boundaries are blurred – most notably in the way that so many of the characters prefer anal sex. Both men and women prefer sodomizing and being sodomized to vaginal intercourse (mainly because vaginal intercourse is too conventional and might lead to pregnancy, an effect that would taint the act as being not exclusively directed toward pleasure). Very frequently the women take on the male role physically/sexually with strap-on dildos, and also in a more intellectual sense in philosophical discoursing (e.g., Saint-Ange), storytelling (e.g., the four storytellers in *Les 120*), and in being main protagonists who conduct themselves in a very proactive and masculine way (e.g., Juliette). Sade has been described by some commentators as a protofeminist. Such a description is certainly a reasonable one, but its contemporary connotation of standing up for the rights of women might cause us to lose sight of the primary effect of Sade’s text in this realm, which is to disrupt the reader’s understanding of masculine and feminine (both in a corporeal and a mental/psychological sense). Thus a sort of protofeminism might be a *corollary* of this particular Sadean endeavor, but it can

by no means be seen as the primary objective here. The effect of Baudrillard's presentation of the notions of masculine and feminine in themselves and in relation to "séduction" is closely comparable to that of Sade's texts. For example, in *De la séduction*, Baudrillard holds: "All of the feminine is absorbed by the masculine – or it melts, and there is no longer any feminine or masculine: degree zero of structure" (16). Shortly after this he asserts: "The power of the feminine is that of seduction" (*ibid.* 18). When we consider that "séduction" is being presented as a very powerful narrative, in opposition to some of the key prevalent narratives (such as production) of contemporary society, then we understand that there is a dynamic of confusion going on here. This is confirmed as Baudrillard links "séduction" with *transvestism* and "*transsexualité*" (my italics) — the "trans" here connoting transgression and instability. In this example of masculine/feminine confusion, we again see the tendency for Baudrillard to pursue his textual strategy through a far more semiotic approach than Sade, in the sense that Sade achieves his result of masculine/feminine confusion through graphic sexual/physical descriptions, whereas for Baudrillard, it is through theorizing and rhetoric.

Baudrillard directly aligns himself in relation to Sade in *De la séduction* (170–75). In this section, Sade is directly mentioned only once, but there can be no doubt that these pages, along with countless others in *De la séduction*, constitute both a critique and an appropriation of certain key Sadean narratives. For example, Baudrillard avers: "The immorality of perversion, like that of seduction, does not arise from an abandonment to sexual pleasures against all morality, it arises from a more serious and subtle abandonment, of sex itself as reference and as morality, including in the realm of pleasures" (*ibid.* 171). This suggestion of the movement towards the hyperreal seems a critique of the catalog of perversions elaborated in *Les 120 Journées de Sodome*, in which the narrative gradually moves further and further away from sexual/erotic descriptions into a realm of torture, violence, and cruelty only very tenuously connected with sex. In *Les 120* the libertines have to go to greater and greater extremes in order to achieve "jouissance" to the extent that they end up practically leaving the realm of the sexual. Such a paradoxical situation forms one of the *theoretical* bases for "séduction" and Baudrillard's conception/presentation of actuality. For "séduction" exists as a challenge to the contemporary state of hyperreality, a state characterized, among other things, by an excess of

images, media, and information. According to Baudrillard, there has been exponentially excessive production in all spheres, but in particular media and information. This has led to a state in which media representations, after having surpassed their objective of being as realistic as possible, end up becoming more real than the real (hence the term “hyperréel”). Such a state of affairs, when applied to sex, leads Baudrillard to entitle the second section of *De la séduction* “Porno-stéréo,” as he relates the unreal, or rather hyperreal world of porn to high-fidelity music technology: “Porno is the quadraphony of sex. It adds a third and a fourth dimension to the sexual act”(50). In Baudrillard’s conception, as in Sade’s, the pursuit of sexual gratification, combined with a logic of taking things to extremes, produces somewhat absurd results, as in this pursuit of the erotic: one ends up in some sense leaving the realm of the erotic. The hyperreal element of Sade might therefore be conceived of as the convoluted sexual scenarios therein described, at whose plausibility even an acrobat would balk. This then is the common engagement of Sade and Baudrillard with impossibility through eroticism, as a means of instantiating a paradoxical play with the limits of reason, discourse, and representation.

Baudrillard’s redefining of Sadean transgression through his semiotic appropriation is distinctly apparent in his avowal of the presence of cruelty within the notion of “séduction.” He affirms: “There is a sort of mental cruelty in the game of the seductress”(118) and describes the “séducteur” as “ironique et diabolique”(*ibid.* 157). In addition, Baudrillard directly refers (*ibid.* 155–56) to the “séduction” existent between Sadean torturers, exalting in their crimes against their victims. This position, in a strong sense affirming the *value* of (a Sadean) cruelty (since “séduction” is very much depicted as a positive force in its rejuvenatory subversive power), is one which is asserted even more strongly in a later text, *La transparence du mal*, in which Baudrillard laments the fact, “We no longer know how to express Evil” (92) and “We have become very weak in satanic energy” (*ibid.*, 89). Such “énergie satanique” is fully present toward the end of *Les 120*. In an example also noted by Paglia (242), the significant disjunction between Sade and Baudrillard is starkly apparent: “After having cut off the balls and prick, cropping them closely, he forms a cunt in the young man with a machine of red-hot iron, which makes the hole and cauterizes it immediately; he fucks him in this aperture and strangles him with his hands while ejaculating” (*Les 120 journées de Sodome*, 369). Since

Sade's text comes to function for Baudrillard, as for Barthes, *paradigmatically* as textual transgression, then there is no need for Baudrillard to employ the same extreme violent or sexual descriptions. It is the theoretical, rather than practical, force of the cruelty entailed in Sadean eroticism that is taken on by Baudrillard.

Perhaps the most obvious and direct appropriation of Sade by Baudrillard concerns the “règle/loi” dichotomy. One wonders whether Baudrillard employs this distinction, most notably in *De la séduction*, because it is one which embodies a key contradiction in Sade. The contradiction instantiated in the “règle/loi” dichotomy consists in the fact that Sade's libertines are perpetually railing against the “lois” of society, arguing that the only laws to which they should be subordinate are those of nature, yet at the same time, for example at the chateau de Silling, a detailed list of “règles” is drawn up, to which even the lawless libertines adhere. This structure serves to highlight the point mentioned earlier, noted by Klossowski, of the libertines' dependence on some structure of regulation in order that they might fulfill their need to perpetually transgress.

Baudrillard theorizes: “If there is a *natural law* of sex, a pleasure principle, then seduction consists in renouncing the principle and in substituting for it a rule of the game, an *arbitrary* rule, and in this sense it is *perverse*” (*De la séduction* 171). As Bennington points out (42–43), the plausibility of Baudrillard's positing of a completely arbitrary rule is at best questionable, since it must, of necessity, constitute itself in contradistinction to laws. Baudrillard's is an exploitation of the tension in Sade between “règle” and “loi,” such that, in a similar way to Sade, the “règle” has superiority. But very much distinct from Sade is the idea that the “règle” subordinates what in Sade is all-powerful nature. Baudrillard explicitly links his notion of “règle” with Sade's:

This is the source of the affinity between the convents, the secret societies, the chateaux in Sade, and the perverse universe. The vows, the rites, the interminable Sadean protocols. The cult of the rule unites them – it is the rule, and not deregulation that is shared. [...] All transgressions are possible, but not infraction of the Rule. (*ibid.* 172)

Baudrillard's connection of his notion of “règle” with Sade's constitutes an ironic subversion of Sade. His establishing of an opposition between “règle” and “loi” acknowledges the

contradiction in Sade in this aspect. His subordination of nature to “règle” inverts the dynamic existent in Sade and, in addition, the fact that “règle” is theorized as an integral part of “séduction” and as an essentially subversive force is a highly ironic inversion of the societal norm, as rules are usually *objects*, rather than *agents*, of subversion. This must be seen as the background to Baudrillard’s rhetorical question: “Is there a more beautiful parody of the ethic of value than to submit oneself with all the intransigence of virtue to the givens of chance or the absurdity of a rule?” (*ibid.* 204) The erotic force of the rules in Sade, which afford sexual stimulation to the libertines as they are transgressed, are transformed in Baudrillard to become the ground for theoretical possibilities of transgression.

Conclusion

Baudrillard’s minimizing or downplaying of the connection between “séduction” and sex is exemplary in its will to deny or overcome what Sade conceives of as all-powerful nature. However, just as Baudrillard exposes the semiotic potentialities in Sade, through Sade we find the instinctual/Dionysiac in Baudrillard. Not only do we find Sadean cruelty and sex reworked into Baudrillard’s notions of “Mal” and “séduction”; but along these paths of investigation suggested by an interpretation in the light of Sade, we become aware of certain elements in Baudrillard that are less recognizably “Baudrillardian.”

In *De la séduction*, Baudrillard describes his central notion:

Seduction is a destiny: in order that it fulfill itself, complete liberty must be present, but also it must be completely whole as if somnambulently directed toward its demise. The young girl must be plunged into this second state, which redoubles the first state, the state of grace and of sovereignty. Arouse this somnambulant state in which awakened passion, intoxicated with itself will obliterate itself in the trap of destiny. (147)

Here, Baudrillard’s association of “séduction” with words like “état second,” “passion,” and “ivre” suggests Nietzsche’s notion of the Dionysiac. His use of the words “somnambulique” and of “état premier,” as associated with the “état second,” suggests the Apolline, which in Nietzsche is intimately connected with the Dionysiac (not just in opposition). Baudrillard would generally want to distance himself from ideas such as the

Dionysiac, for its implications of a transcendent reality are anathema to his semiotic, immanent focus. As has become apparent, Baudrillard is very much against the Sadean belief in the incontrovertible power of nature. Yet his own rhetoric becomes tied up in this idea; for example, when he states that “la séduction est un destin”: for destiny implies determinism, which leaves no room for human will against the inevitable course of nature.

Although it is true that Baudrillard employs what I have described as Dionysiac terminology within an extremely semiotic paradigm, and arguably even subverts it, the fact is that he *has* used such terminology, and in doing so has become bound up in its semantics and connotations. My contention is that Baudrillard is aware of the inevitability of a Dionysiac presence, such that this sentiment even pervades some of his key concepts/terms. We have already seen this in “séduction,” but it may also be considered to be the case as regards “écliptique” (*De la séduction*), “précession” (*Simulacres et simulation*), “sidérale” (*Amérique* 1986). All of these words are important enough to form part of chapter headings in their respective texts. Although Baudrillard’s use of all of these words may be seen as some sort of subversion of or toying with scientific terminology, and thereby the scientific mind-set, when we consider the meanings of the words, there seems to be more at stake. The words “écliptique” and “précession” refer to the movement of celestial spheres; “sidérale” can be a reference simply to anything concerned with the stars, or to the movement of celestial bodies. Such terminology, when used in a semiotic context, where language is the prime mover and is, as stated in *La pensée radicale*, the principal mode of subversion and change, has a great irony. For what possible impact could language have on the movement of the celestial spheres? Perhaps this *is* what Baudrillard is suggesting – that is, that language *does* indeed have this level of importance and power. However, what I would like to highlight here is the way that, despite Baudrillard’s attempts to give primacy to the semiotic over the natural, the force and power of nature succeeds in instantiating itself even in the very terminology Baudrillard employs. Therefore, the semiotic realm, far from being distinct and superior, will always be profoundly connected to deep, primal, natural structures. In the same way that Nietzsche theorizes the Apolline as intimately connected with the Dionysiac and primal oneness, we must see a Sadean eroticism as formative of Baudrillardian “séduction” in

its connection with and deference to nature, which is something written into the Baudrillardian semiotic.

Notes

- 1 Significantly, and in a similar vein, in *L'échange Symbolique et la Mort* (205) Baudrillard explicitly acknowledges Paz's distinction between "un corps" and "un non-corps" in the context of "the separation of man and nature."
- 2 All references are to the original works in French. All translations of the quotations are my own.
- 3 Nietzsche's notion of the Dionysiac, as presented in *The Birth of Tragedy*, arises out of his interpretation/ extrapolation of the myth of Dionysos. Like its counterpart the Apolline (to which it stands both in opposition and as complement), it is never crisply defined. However, it may be conceived of as a primal state (nonrepresentational, nonrational), associated with "Rausch" (intoxication, and, in Nietzsche, a heightened sense of being) and also pain and horror (the essence of existence) and entailing destruction of individuation and dissolution of boundaries. It is through the Dionysiac that one might access the realm of "primal oneness" or Schopenhauerian "Will."
- 4 Often, Baudrillard will make reference to figures such as Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Foucault in such a way that the reader's attention is diverted from Baudrillard's true debt to the figure (i.e., by referring to them on matters not centrally related to their area of influence on Baudrillard's text). This is the case to an extent with Sade, as Baudrillard does not acknowledge any debt to him for his conception of the notion of "séduction," which is in many senses Sadean in spirit. It should be noted here, though, that other figures, such as Bataille, McLuhan, and Benjamin are more directly acknowledged.
- 5 One should note, however, that Sade is not generally affirmed by Baudrillard as the main source of such an imperative, which he sees as part of his Situationist, Debordian leanings (see Gane, 1997: 168).

Works Cited

Barthes, Roland. *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.
 —. *L'échange symbolique et la mort*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.
 —. *De la séduction*. Paris: Galilée, 1979.
 —. *Simulacres et simulation*. Paris: Le livre de poche, 1981.
 —. *Amérique*. Paris: Livre de Poche, 1986.
 —. *L'autre par lui-même, habilitation*. Paris: Galilée, 1987.
 —. *La transparence du mal*. Paris: Galilée, 1990.
 —. *La pensée radicale*. Paris: Sens et Tonka, 1994.
 —. *La guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu*. Paris: Galilée, 1996.
 Bataille, Georges. "La valeur d'usage de D. A. F. de Sade." *Oeuvres*. vol. 2, 1967.
 Blanchot, Michel. "La raison de Sade" 1947. *Lautréamont et Sade*. Paris: Minuit, 1969.
 Bennington, Geoffrey. "Sade: Laying Down the Law." *Oxford Literary Review* 6: 2 (1984), 38–56.
 Booker, Keith M. *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literature: Transgression, Abjection, and the Carnivalesque*. Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1991.
 Gane, Mike. *Baudrillard Live*. London: Routledge, 1993.
 Gallop, Jane. *Intersections*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1981.
 Hassan, Ihab. *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*. London: U of Wisconsin P, 1982.
 Jean, Raymond. *Un portrait de Sade*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1989.
 Klossowski, Pierre. *Sade mon prochain*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1947.
 —. *Le Philosophe Scélérat*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967.
 James, Ian. *Pierre Klossowski: The Persistence of a Name*. Oxford: Legenda, 2000.
 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Paglia, Camille. *Sexual Personae*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Paz, Octavio. *An Erotic Beyond: Sade*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993.

Sade *Oeuvres I, Les Cent Vingt Journées de Sodome*. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris: Gallimard, 1990.

—. *Oeuvres III, La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*. Ed. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris: Gallimard, 1998.

Schaeffer, Neil. *The Marquis de Sade: A Life*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1999.